The students found that some of the modules were difficult to understand. The students had difficulty coping with OSCE's. The students had difficulty expressing ideas or patterns of thought. A consensus discussion took place where the final themes and sub-themes were identified. Rigor was ensured by utilising Lincoln and Guba’s evaluative criteria (Polit & Beck, 2012:582). Content analysis (Silverman, 2010: 433) was used to analyse the data. All the researchers participated in identifying repeated ideas or patterns of thought. A qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual design was utilised in this study (Schoor, E.B & Goy, 2011:57). The research population consisted of ten first year isiXhosa-speaking nursing students, between the ages of 18 to 21, who were registered to study at a private nursing education institution in Port Elizabeth. The sample was selected purposively (Poth & Beek, 2009:460). Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in isiXhosa. After the interviews were transcribed, the researchers discussed the meaning of the text and identified the themes. Ethical principles were ensured by obtaining permission to conduct the study from the NMMU ethics committee, as well as the informed consent of the study participants. All the participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The participants were assured that all their responses would be treated confidentially. Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Committee at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. First year isiXhosa-speaking nursing students, attending a private nursing education institution in Port Elizabeth, appeared to encounter difficulties in understanding the course content to which they were exposed. They had difficulty communicating their thoughts in English which sometimes resulted in them failing tests and examinations. This led the researchers to ask the following question: “How do first year isiXhosa-speaking nursing students experience their training, in a language which is not their mother tongue?” The aim of this study was to explore and describe how first year isiXhosa-speaking nursing students experience their nursing training in a language which is not presented in their mother tongue.

Discussion & Conclusion

Nursing students from an isiXhosa-speaking background encountered significant language challenges during theoretical and work based learning experiences. These students were intelligent and were able to meet the institution’s selection criteria but struggled to cope with the language in which the programme was presented. They had difficulty coping with the information discussed in class as they did not understand terminology or at times lost track of discussions or arguments. When they tried to review their notes or the textbook, they could not understand the content under discussion. They were unable to attend extra classes or review material at home as they needed a lot of time to travel. They found it difficult to learn and produce the information required in assessment situations. Not being able to understand the content meant that they failed tests, assignments and examinations. Failure impacted negatively on the students’ self-esteem. Another problem identified by the students was that they were unable to understand the spoken language used by staff and patients when doing practical work in the hospital. All these problems contributed to falling and the high attrition rates among isiXhosa-speaking students (Manson, 2014:61).

Recommendations

Students developed and identified various strategies in an attempt to cope with the language demands. Some of these strategies included the regular use of dictionaries, self-translation of the content of lectures, becoming part of a study group, use of technology (Google), use of visual learning aids and asking isiXhosa speaking fellow students or lecturers to assist them in understanding the course content. The strategies used by students seemed to be successful in some cases and should be encouraged by lecturers. Lecturers should be sensitive to language barriers experienced by students and should try teaching strategies that accommodate visual learning styles. Lecturers should ensure that the students are aware of what is expected of them and understand the instructions given to them. In assessment situations, lecturers must ensure the students understand the differences in terminology, such as “evaluate,” “describe,” “list” or “analyse.” Additional language support strategies should be implemented by the nursing education institution to strengthen the language ability of students. In conclusion, it is imperative that nursing educators adopt a student centred approach when facilitating a programme of study (Shukri, 2014:201).

References

3. Manson, T.A. 2014. A relationship between matriculation English results and academic performance in nursing students at the Awaolu-otulogisho/nursing Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10321571212334716/MANSON%202014.pdf?sequence=1&isDetected=1 Accessed 2018/06/19